



November Newsletter

ALCDSB

Every Day Counts!

We believe that our students want to be in community and want to be part of a classroom that is rich and engaging. There are 19 school days in a month, which is about 120 hours of instruction time. While this seems like a lot when you clump it together it is easy to chip away at these times one day at a time. We know

that there are reasons that students will need to miss school and families do their best to minimize them. Sometimes the number of absences and late arrivals can creep up and become some major time missed. We monitor the attendance of our students mainly to see if there are ways we can support families to help their children attend on a regular

basis, but also because we know the benefits of regular routine around attendance. Mr. French has started sending home letters letting parents know if their child has missed more than a week of school. The goal is to have our students arrive regularly and on-time so they can make the most of their learning. We will be in touch.



Please do not park in our Fire Lane or Accessible Parking Spots; even just dropping off kids. We have staff, students and families that need the parking spots and have permits to use them. Should this continue to be an issue we will ask the city to help with enforcement. Thank You.

Our Catholic Parent Council

Our Catholic Parent Council is being led by Mrs. Jessica Couture this year. She is working with an amazing group of parents who are working hard to guide the work of the school and to engage parents. There is always room for more parents to be involved and it does not mean you have to sit on Council. They are going to be running many community engagement events and could always use help. One of the key elements of the work the Council will do this year is around Faith Formation for all students, staff and parents; plus around Parent Voice and Engagement. Last year the council started to purchase portable AC units for the classrooms and this year they want to finish purchasing them for the rest of the classrooms. This is an incredible investment that speaks to their commitment to the learning environment for the students and staff in the school. The Catholic Parent Council also

have their own Facebook Page that is monitored regularly and shares school events and information. The Facebook page is a place to share and celebrate the great things about St. Mary's. If you have issues with pizza, milk or the yard contact the school directly, please do not post negative things on the page. It will be taken down and you can be blocked from participating in future discussions. The Council takes this page very seriously and understand the role and power of social media to be an effective tool in promoting the reputation of the school and they are committed to keeping it as positive as possible. You can reach out via this page, or message the various council members should you wish to know more about their upcoming work.

Our Supervisory Officer Ms. Slack

Every school works with a Supervisory Officer. We are very fortunate to work with Ms. Terri Slack who not only provides guidance for the work that the school does, but also represents the system perspective on relevant issues. Many parents will call her directly when upset about things like their children missing milk for a day, before they even contact the school. Ms. Slack's Administrative Assistant will then direct you back to the school. It is important that when issues arise and you may be upset about something that you always contact the school first, either through the agenda, a telephone call, or popping in to see us. 99% of issues can be re-

solved very easily through dialogue and a growth mindset. When Ms. Slack will become an active partner with an issue will be if the school and a family cannot come up with a mutually agreeable solution for an issue; or one of us feels the need for another perspective on a sensitive issue. This is not common and would be a secondary after many conversations. The key goal is for the school and our families to have rich and engaging relationships that promote the growth and wellness for all. This is done through collaboration which starts at the school first.

Masses are Whole Community Events

We celebrate Mass every month as a community. We are also very fortunate to celebrate with Father Francis who not only leads us in mass, but also comes every month to spend time with our students spreading the Good News through songs, stories and answering student questions. Our Parish is St. Peter in Chains, which is the Church Father Francis works at with Father Tim Harrison. While we do school masses once a month



we strongly encourage families to attend mass at the Church and also want to let

families know that you are welcomed to join us for mass at the school. While we cannot accommodate a whole congregation, we will always make room for those who join us. It is an great way for you to see how we teach your children about the mass, but also another way to be part of our faith community and celebrate a very important element of our school is gathering in communion.

Layer Clothing and Label Everything

With the weather being so unpredictable it is very important that students come with layers of clothing so they can regulate what they are wearing. It is also very important that they come with proper winter clothing. Some students arrive without coats, gloves or hats with the

temperature being in the minus. If this happens we ask children to call home to get proper clothing brought. Between recess and lunch recess our students are outside for almost two hours. This is a good thing,

but also requires they be dressed for the weather. We also ask that parents label everything.

There are only 3 or 4 styles of shoes, coats and other items for kids so assuming your child will know their own items might not be possible as two other children in their class might have the same boots.

On average we send about 20 bags of clothing to charity because they have no name and are unclaimed.

School Cash Online

We have had a great start to the year with moving to the online payment method. This is a reminder that if you need to put physical cash on your account, Ms. Campbell can do so from 10am-11am every day. The

goal is to move above the 90% mark for family enrollment on the site and we are already at 78%. Let us know if you have any questions, or need help registering, our team can help you do that.



EQAO Results

In May/June of 2017 our students in grades 3 and 6 took part in the Education, Quality and Accountability Office provincial assessment. The purpose of the assessment was to measure the learning of the students for their current grade and for the previous two years. The testing is divided into three sections: Reading; Writing and Mathematics. Our students wrote over the period of a week, for the duration of a morning. Students who received Special Education Resource Teacher supports were accommodated to maximize their learning styles and students with

assistive technology used that to achieve success. Upon the completion of the testing and the results that follow we have much to celebrate and further plans for success. The key to remember is that the data is used to inform our practice, provide feedback to the public and help families initiate conversations around their child's learning. We as a staff have looked at the data we have and will use it to inform our planning at the school level to fill in learning gaps that have been identified. Our grades 5 teacher and St. Paul's grade 7 teachers have

the data and will use that to help plan for the learning of their students for the upcoming year. For obvious reasons we will be heavily focusing on Numeracy in conjunction with our attention to student's higher order thinking skills. The data is based on percentile reporting, but I do need to point out that each student represents a percentage in the data analysis. They key is conversation and planning and ensuring that the work we do supports the key Math and Literacy Skills outlined in our Ontario curriculum.

EQAO Data: 2017-2018

Grade 3:

***Reading:** 58% level 3&4
40% level 2

2% level 1

Writing: 55% level 3&4

45% level 2

0% level 1

Math: 29% level 3&4

62% level 2

9% level 1

Grade 6:

Reading: 68% level 3&4

32% level 2

Writing: 73% level 3&4

27% level 2

Math: 30% level 3&4

43% level 2

27% level 1

* There is a clear trend of students pooling at level 2 and we will address that in our plan for 2018/19.

Math Plan for 2018-2019

We developed a strong math plan last year with the support of the Central Office. This will be year two of our plan and Ms. Kelly and Ms. Patrick are leading the co-

learning part with teachers. We will also be working with Ms. McCaw from the Central Office as our Math Coach. The focus for this year will be guided by the

directive provided by the Ministry of Education with a focus on Number Sense for our students. We will be providing more information as we work through the plan.

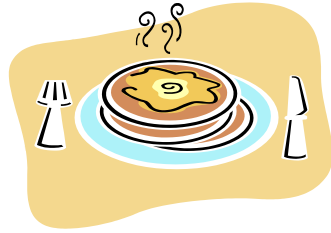


What is Math “Thinking”?

- *It is the understanding that numbers have a relationship to each other, not just counting from 1-100.*
- *When we talk about math thinking in answering a question it is looking at the problem, figuring out what it is asking us to do, then making a plan using the Order of Operations to come up with an answer.*
- *Math thinking is also looking back at our answers to ensure “reasonableness” in what we put in. For example we know that $100-54=46$, some students will give answers like 459 which does not even relate as it is past 100 and we know we were asked to subtract. .*

Breakfast Club: Donations and Volunteers

Thank you to all of the families who donated cereal to our Breakfast Club, it really was incredible to see how proud your children were to be able to share them. This program is a key element of our Wellness Plan for the school and is also an excellent way for students who need it to start their day in community. We have some pretty stringent rules about the foods we can serve and



also need to ensure that they are nut free. After Christmas we will be running a pancake mix and syrup drive. We have an incredible team of people who regularly make pancakes for

the program. There are only two brands that we can use and we will share the name. One major change to the program is now the inclusion of needing a social entry, or soft-entry as part of why children can participate. This speaks to the power of the program and the fact that sitting in community to share food can look different for different families.

Safe Schools Practices

Our school and Central Office are committed to ensuring the safety of all of our students and staff everyday. There are a rather extensive set of policies and practices around Safe Schools that must be adhered to in order to ensure everyone's safety. While it may look at times that we are being too stringent, there are reasons that

school based practices are in place and the way we do things. Some parents have voiced that they have a right to bring their children into their classrooms, however that is not the case. We practice "controlled access" for the school which means only people who have

We have very specific rules in place about who has access to our students for everyone's safety.

cleared all the necessary HR and police checks will have access to our students. As well, in some classes we have 30 students, their teacher and ECE trying to start their day. This means they need all the space we can provide for them. Thank you.

Milk and Pizza

Signing up for milk and pizza is very easy using the on-line payment system. There are options and we have had many positive comments about the ease of being able to do this whenever is convenient for families. In some cases students have either become confused about getting

pizza and mix-ups can happen. We have over 200 students who order pizza each week and almost as much for milk. In most cases we are able to solve any issues and get students their pizza. Sometimes students do not get their pizza and do not tell anyone. In some cases parents

will post unflattering things online, or call extremely upset. The key to remember is that we cannot fix what we do not know, so please encourage your children to let the supervisor, or office know asap if they did not get pizza. Our goal is to have things run smoothly for our kids.

Terry Fox Run



Thank you Mrs. Malone for arranging the Terry Fox Run this year. It was a great success. Teachers also did inquiries around Accessibility with their students in preparation for the run. The goal of the school participating is not only to celebrate a Canadian Hero, but also to provide our students with some tangible lessons about people with medical and mobility needs. This will be our only third party fundraising event for the year as we have scaled back fundraising events for outside agencies. As a school we are aligning our fundraising priorities and ensuring they support the work of our School Improvement Plan.

Indigenous Education at STMT

We continue to build relationships in service of our Indigenous students, staff and families. The key piece for our plan is around relationship and communication. We now also have a school Land Acknowledgement that is shared every morning and will become part of

our larger gatherings too. As we learn more, the physical environment will also change. We have integrated Indigenous elements into our common spaces, the most notable in the foyer and Learning Commons. We will continue to strengthen our relationships and to

explore the power of community under our Catholic Faith teachings and traditions. Over the year each class will also have a Knowledge Keeper from a local Indigenous community to conduct a workshop, supporting our curriculum. We will share more in the future.



Our leader Mr. McDonald.



FUN FRENCH FACTS

DID YOU KNOW?

Canada's largest francophone community outside of Quebec is Ontario! The Franco-Ontarian community has over 400 years of history, starting when Samuel de Champlain explored Ontario in 1615. Over 612,000 francophone people celebrate Franco-Ontarian Day on September 25th.

Encourage your child to be a lifelong learner of French!

Bullying Prevention for 2018-19

Our Safe and Caring Catholic Schools Plan is posted on our school website. It is important that you know where it is as this is the framework for our Bullying Prevention plan for the upcoming year. The plan has

been shared with our Catholic Parent Council for feedback and with teachers. As a community we are committed to ensuring the wellbeing of our students and know that bullying can pre-

vent this. We are also working to ensure that we create a community where students also stand up against bullying and help anyone who may be experiencing it.

Staff Changes

There have been some changes to our staff this month. Ms. Walsh has accepted a position with another school and Miss. Ervine is the new teacher. Mrs. Lewis will move from the Educational Assistant

Role to being our New Learning Resources Assistant and we will have a new Educational Assistant to replace her. We are very fortunate to have an incredible team that keeps growing.



Bussing: Some Reminders



We have around 300 students who ride the bus every day. We work in partner-

ship with TriBoard Transportation to arrange bussing. They determine stops, pick up times and routes. The only thing we do at the school is submit the paperwork. There are also some very specific rules around student conduct on the bus and it is important that our students follow them for their safety. If we cannot ensure that students are safe because they are not follow-

ing the rules then they will not be eligible to ride the bus. It is important to know that bussing is provided as a service by the School Board and is not a “right” for students. We also are participating in the Bus Patroller program this year. It is where senior students help teach the younger students bus rules and how that looks when they are on the bus.

IEP's and Special Education

Student Individual Education Plans have come home and are being finalized with your feedback. These plans are important tools for certain students learning success. The development of the IEP is a collaborative effort that involves the teacher, parents, Resource Teacher and school Administration. We are very fortunate to have a team at St. Mary that not only has strength in developing the IEP, but also in coming up with supports based on a

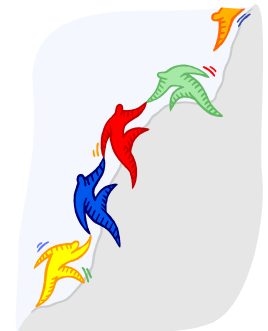
strengths viewpoint of student ability. The creation of an IEP is an extensive process and takes into consideration many different elements and sources of data. Some outside agencies make suggestions, or direct parents to “ask” for an IEP to get certain services for children. It does not work this way. The presence of an IEP does not create a shopping list of services that automatically become available. We work with providers to gain ser-

vices and resources for students based on medical advice, para professional reports and central level team engagement. The conversation with parents will also occur long before we create an IEP and is based on relationship and collaboration. We take the process seriously as there are legal requirements for the creation and maintenance of an IEP. If you have any questions contact the school.

Wellness and Personal Safety

Our school has a focus on Wellness and Personal Safety. We know that in order for students to feel connected to the learning community there needs to be explicit attention paid to their holistic wellness. This includes supporting students in making nutritional choices, getting fresh

air and exercise and having a personal growth mindset. You will notice in our School Improvement Plan that we now have linked Wellness to our equity statements which are highlighted in green on the document. We feel the need to make these statements clear for all.



Advent a Time to Prepare

The season of Advent begins December 2nd. As a school community we are going to have a variety of activities to help the children understand the true purpose of the season and how they are to use the time to prepare. On December 8th we are asking the whole school to wear blue to mark the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, signifying our relationship with the Virgin Mary whom our school is named after and is the Mother of our Church. We will also be having some visual creations around the school which will be created by our Faith Club, marking key milestones during the season.

In addition to the visual creations, our school mass for December will take place at St. Peter in Chains Church. Our goal is to try and celebrate as many masses as possible with our community in the Church. Parents and Grand Parents are invited to join us for this mass on December 4th at 9am.

We need your help to keep the focus on Advent and Christmas on the religious realm for our students. While it is exciting to talk about Santa Clause, if you could also make sure that the conversation includes the role of the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph and the biblical story that accompanies the Birth of Jesus.



Medical Care Plans and General Medication Protocols



Thank you to all of the parents who have helped us in preparing our Medical Care Plans. These plans did take a considerable amount of work, but really are necessary in supporting the safety of some students. While we appreciate that the need for the Doctor's signature was a

challenge for some families, these are vital not only from a legal perspective, but also in ensuring that the correct actions are being taken for your children. The plans are kept in a safe spot and are shared with staff who will teach and supervise the children they are needed for. It is crucial that if there are any changes in your child's medical condition, medication needs or general care needs that you let the school know right away. We want to make sure that each child's plan is as current as possible. One

thing that has not changed is the administration of any form of medicine without the medical permission form being completed. As a school we are not allowed to give any form of medication without these forms even things like Advil. What we will always facilitate is for parents to be able to come in and do this whenever needed. Our goal is always to maintain our students' safety and to support families in doing so.